

The Stars and Stripes: America's Flag

by Margaret Ramsay

In the United States, Flag Day is celebrated on June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the U.S. flag by resolution of the Second Continental Congress in 1777. The United States flag is an important symbol for the U.S. and one of the world's most recognizable symbols. The 50 stars on the flag represent the 50 U.S. states, and the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies that rebelled against British colonial rule in the 18th century.

The U.S. flag has been changed 26 times since the new, 13-state union adopted it. The 48-star version went unchanged for 47 years, until the 49-star version became official on July 4, 1959 (the first July 4 following Alaska's admission to the union on January 3, 1959). The 47 years of the 48-star version had been the longest time the flag went unmodified until July 5, 2007, when the 50-star version of the Flag of the United States broke the record.

The U.S. flag is also known as Old Glory, the Stars and Stripes, and the Star-Spangled Banner. A source of pride for most Americans, many proudly display the flag at their residences, on their cars and on their clothing as a flag pin. The flag is also flown outside of public buildings in the U.S., and becomes especially popular on civic holidays such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day, when Americans honor and remember their military personnel. It is a tradition for Americans to place small flags near graves and war memorials on these holidays. And the biggest holiday of all for use and display of the U.S. flag is America's Independence Day, also known as the Fourth of July. Many Americans fly flags on this day, wear red, white and blue clothing, and celebrate U.S. independence through community fireworks displays and listening to patriotic music.

The U.S. flag also plays an important and ceremonial part in military funerals. It is traditionally draped across a fallen veteran's

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Children help keep a large U.S. flag off the ground as it is raised at Broadwater Overlook Park in Great Falls, Montana, during a Flag Day celebration on June 14, 2006. (AP Photo/Great Falls Tribune, Robin Loznak)

The American Center

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Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

H O L I D A Y S

None

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Readers,

June – the start of summer in the U.S. – brings with it many memories of school holidays, family vacations, swimming, sailing, summer camps, music festivals, barbecues, clam bakes, and of course, state fairs.

State fairs are an enduring summer ritual in the U.S. State and county fairs have been organized in the United States since 1841, when the first fair was held in Syracuse, New York. Agriculture, livestock, amusement games, and food – both its production and enjoyment – have been at the center from the very beginning.

Today, state and county fairs are known for their singularly odd and unhealthy food offerings, many of which are served on a stick or skewer. This, of course, is one of the main reasons we Americans love state fairs! Some of the highlights from last summer's state fairs included creations such as fried doughnut burgers, fruit punch dill pickles, fried cookie dough, fried macaroni and cheese (notice a theme here?), fried spaghetti and meatballs on a stick, and "donkey tails." A donkey tail does not actually contain any donkey parts. It's a large, cheese-filled sausage, enveloped in a flour tortilla and deep-fried. One could top it with chili, nacho cheese, or salsa if one is watching one's calories.

To drink, there are deep-fried lattes, deep-fried Coca Cola, and deep-fried Cosmopolitans.

Thankfully, summer is also the season of organic farmers' markets, bursting with fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy and detoxifying foodstuff.

Many of us are eagerly awaiting the kickoff of the FIFA World Cup on June 11 in South Africa. I grew up playing soccer (football as it's called everywhere outside the U.S.) year-round, so the World Cup is as important to me as the Olympic Games. This year, the U.S. team will face off against England in its first match. I'm hopeful of my national team's chances. If the Americans advance to the quarterfinals or even further, it wouldn't qualify as an enormous surprise, but the key will lie in how cohesive the roster turns out to be. In contrast to U.S. teams from the recent past that were best known for their goalkeeping, this one is more offense-minded; its attack rates among the top ten in the world, but its defense is 34th. I know I will be glued to my TV for most of June!



Robyn Remeika
Cultural Affairs Officer

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casket, and as the casket is lowered into the ground for burial, the flag is ceremonially folded and given to the veteran's family as a token of respect for his or her sacrifice. The U.S. flag is also used in this way at certain civil service funerals, such as those of a President.

The American flag can also be used to convey the nation's mood. For instance, the flag is lowered to half-staff on the following U.S. holidays: Memorial Day (last Monday in May); Korean War Veterans Day (July 27); Patriot Day (September 11); and National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (December 7). The flag is also flown at half-staff for the 30 days following a President or former President's death, and for ten days following the death of a vice president, Supreme Court chief justice, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The flag is always flown at half-staff at these four locations: Arlington National Cemetery, Punchbowl in Honolulu, the Gettysburg National Cemetery, and Post Cemetery at Mackinac Island in Michigan.

The United States Flag Code outlines certain guidelines for the use, display, and disposal of the flag. For example, the flag should never be dipped to any person or thing, unless it is the ensign responding to a salute from a ship of a foreign nation. The flag should never be allowed to touch the ground and, if flown at night, must be illuminated. If the edges become worn or tattered through wear and tear, the flag should be repaired or replaced. When a flag is so worn-out that it can no longer serve as a symbol of the United States, it should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning. The American Legion and other organizations regularly conduct dignified flag-burning ceremonies, often on Flag Day. It is a common myth that if a flag touches the ground or becomes soiled, it must be burned as well, but this is not the case. While a flag that is currently touching the ground and a soiled flag are unfit for display, neither situation is permanent and thus the flag does not need to be burned if the unfit situation is remedied.

The U.S. flag has been a proud symbol for Americans throughout our history, and many of our countrymen will be flying the "Stars and Stripes" on June 14.

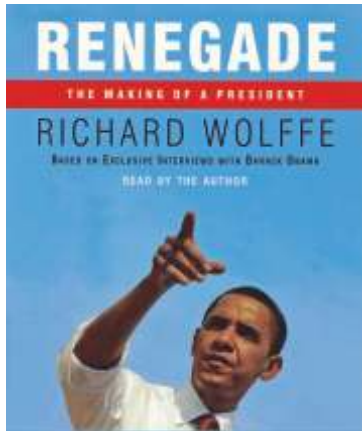
Maggie Ramsay works at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai



Members of the Kimberly High School band rehearse folding a 120- by 60-foot American Flag on the field at Papermaker Stadium in Kimberly, Wisconsin, on October 15, 2009. The flag, which weighs 450 pounds and is the largest ever flown, was delivered to the stadium by a Village of Kimberly fire truck for use in the next night's game against Appleton East High School. (AP Photo/ Kirk Wagner, The Post-Crescent)

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Recent Additions to the Library



Renegade: The Making of a President

by Richard Wolffe

Random House, Inc., 2009

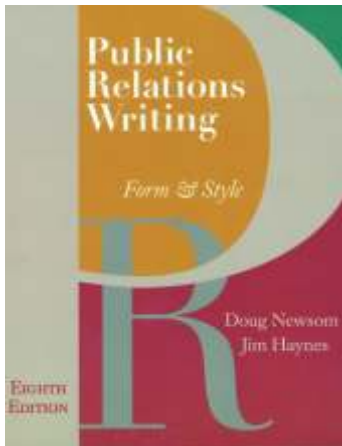
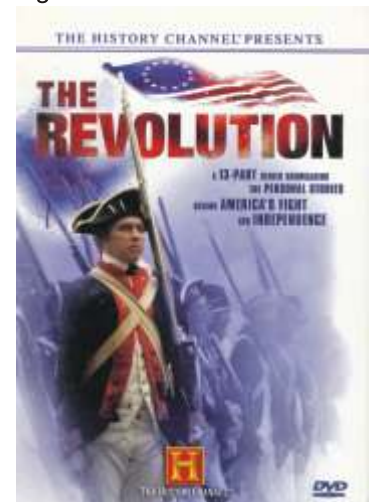
This audiobook is the epic story of how a political newcomer with no money and an alien name, grew into the world's most powerful leader. It is also a uniquely intimate portrait of the person behind the iconic posters and the Secret Service code name Renegade.

The Revolution

by Peter Schnall et al

The History Channel, 2006

This 13-part DVD series tells the remarkable story of America's fight for independence. From the roots of the rebellion and the signing of the Declaration of Independence to victory on the battlefield at Yorktown, and the adoption of the United States Constitution, *The Revolution* tells the story of this important era in history.

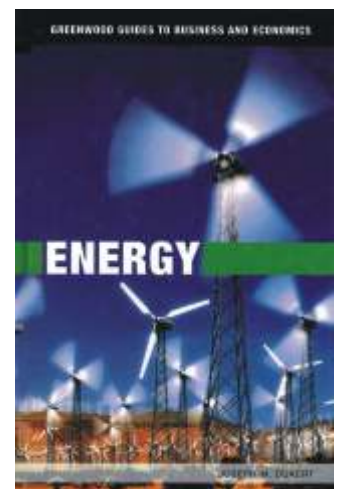


Public Relations Writing: Form & Style

by Doug Newsom and Jim Haynes

Thomson Wadsworth, 2008

Crafting an effective and successful public relations campaign is both a challenge and an art. This well-written hands-on text guides the reader through the steps of good PR writing, including style and techniques, with writing assignments.



Energy

by Joseph M. Dukert

Greenwood Press, 2009

As part of the Greenwood Guides to Business and Economics series, this book addresses energy efficiency through chapters elucidating basic concepts including energy resources, cost, reliability of supply, environment, effects on the human environment, energy policy, and sustainable development.

Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at libref@state.gov for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.

**"The Times, They are a-Changing"
Bob Dylan and His Influence on
American Culture
Discussion led by Phil Dimon**

**Monday, June 21
American Center Auditorium**

6:00 p.m.

Few musicians have had as big an impact on American culture as Bob Dylan. One of the most famous singer-songwriters and musicians in history, Dylan started performing in the 1960s and is still performing in concerts today. Over the last 50 years, through music and interviews, Dylan has fought for a better society and has been a strong advocate for human rights and freedom of speech. Phil Dimon will explore Bob Dylan's music and influence on American culture, with special emphasis on major historical events in the U.S. in the 1960s and the role that Dylan played during that time. As part of the presentation, we will listen to some of Dylan's most important songs and view photos from some of his most famous performances.

Phil Dimon works at the U.S. Consulate General, and this is his first post in the Foreign Service. He grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, and studied at Williams College in Massachusetts. Following his graduation from Williams in 2003, Phil joined the U.S. Peace Corps and spent two years in Guinea, West Africa, teaching English to high school students. He returned to Washington, D.C. for four years, where he taught and supervised civics education programs for U.S. high school students, worked for an international nonprofit organization setting up study abroad programs for Americans, and then joined the State Department. Phil is an avid tennis player and fan, and he enjoys listening to music and occasionally playing the guitar.

The garrison flag and largest in use by the U.S. Army, 20 x 38 feet, was the first flown over the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein in Germany just after World War I by the 17th Field Artillery at Camp Blanding in Florida, and shown in 1942. It was raised over the camp in an Independence Day symbolism accentuating the United Nations' fight against Axis aggression. Brigadier General L. A. Kunzig, Camp Commander (closest to flag), and Lieutenant Colonel Harry A. Johnston, Camp Executive, salute as the military police color guard raise it on the camp ground flagstaff. (AP Photo)

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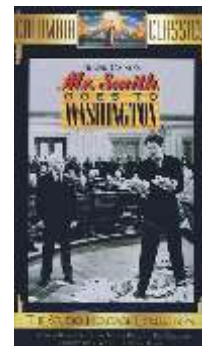
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**American Center Auditorium
3:30 and 6:30 p.m.**

Friday, June 11

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
(1939, 130 mins)

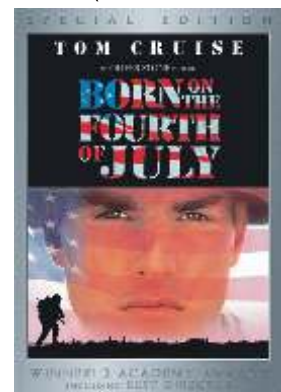
Frank Capra's classic comedy-drama about government and the American spirit. Jimmy Stewart is an idealistic senator who tries to stem the tide of graft he finds around him. Claude Rains is a corrupt colleague, Jean Arthur a jaded secretary who joins Stewart's crusade.



Friday, June 25

Born on the Fourth of July
(1989, 145 mins)

The gut-wrenching true story of Ron Kovic, a Vietnam war veteran who was left paralyzed in battle by a sniper's bullet, and returned home to eventually become an outspoken opponent of the war. Tom Cruise gives a knockout performance as Kovic. Oscar-winning direction from Oliver Stone. Willem Dafoe, Kyra Sedgwick and Tom Berenger costar.



Admission to American Center programs, restricted to persons over 14, unless otherwise specified, is on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.